

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-10 (cancelled)

11. (Currently amended) A plant cultivating substrate produced by reacting:
a water-retentive filling material, water, urethane prepolymer and a polyol
under conditions which form a plant cultivating substrate ~~with reduced hardness,
improved shape retentivity and enhanced water absorptivity.~~
12. (Previously presented) The plant cultivating substrate of claim 11, wherein
said water retentive filling material under dry conditions is from 15 to 60 wt. % of
said plant cultivating substrate.
13. (Previously presented) The plant cultivating substrate of claim 11, wherein
said polyol contains an ester group.
14. (Previously presented) The plant cultivating substrate of claim 11, wherein the
polyol is present in an amount of from 0.1 to 300 weight parts relative to 100
weight parts of the water-retentive filling material under dry conditions.
15. (Previously presented) The plant cultivating substrate of claim 11, wherein
said urethane prepolymer contains an isocyanate group.
16. (Previously presented) The plant cultivating substrate of claim 15, wherein
said urethane prepolymer is formed by reacting toluene diisocyanate with a polyol.
17. (Previously presented) The plant cultivating substrate of claim 11, wherein
said urethane prepolymer is present in an amount of from 50 to 300 weight parts

relative to 100 weight parts of the water-retentive filling material under dry conditions.

18. (Previously presented) The plant cultivating substrate of claim 17, wherein said urethane prepolymer is present in an amount of from 120 to 200 weight parts relative to 100 weight parts of the water-retentive filling material under dry conditions.
19. (Currently amended) The plant cultivating substrate of claim 11, wherein said water-retentive filling material comprises: peat moss, coco peat, sawdust, coconut husk, chaff, chaff compost, ~~dark~~ bark compost, perlite, vermiculite, or hydrophilic foam resin pulverized powder.
20. (Previously presented) The plant cultivating substrate of claim 11, wherein the substrate has water absorptivity of from 25% to 75% by weight relative to the weight of said plant cultivating substrate, hardness of from 20N to 40N, and restoring force of from 4N to 10N.
21. (Currently amended) A method of manufacturing a plant cultivating substrate comprising reacting and curing (i) a water-retentive filling material, (ii) water, (iii) a urethane prepolymer and (iv) a polyol, wherein said water-retentive filling material under dry conditions is from 15 to 60 wt. % of said plant cultivating substrate, ~~thereby providing said plant cultivating substrate with reduced hardness, improved shape retentivity and enhanced water absorptivity.~~
22. (Previously presented) The method of claim 21 comprising the steps of:
 - (i) mixing the water-retentive filling material with said water to form a first suspension,

(ii) adding said urethane prepolymer and said polyol to said first suspension and mixing to form a second suspension,

(iii) reacting and curing said second suspension to obtain the plant cultivating substrate.

23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 21, wherein said polyol is present in an amount of from 0.1 to 300 weight parts relative to 100 weight parts of said water-retentive filling material under dry conditions.
24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 21, wherein said polyol contains an ester group.
25. (Previously presented) The method of claim 21, wherein said reacting and curing takes place in a substrate forming mold having a top and a bottom.
26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 25, wherein said manufacturing is effected such that an upper face of the plant cultivating substrate is located on the bottom of said substrate forming mold.
27. (Currently amended) The method of claim 21, wherein said water- retentive filling material comprises: peat moss, coco peat, sawdust, coconut husk, chaff, chaff compost, ~~dark~~ bark compost, perlite, vermiculite, or hydrophilic foam resin pulverized powder.